

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN THE WORLD FOR MAN

Eccl. 12:13

INTRODUCTION:

Title suggests a pretty exclusive subject for our study! **Short life ... much to do.** What's **MOST IMPORTANT** thing? [**Read text**] **Matt.7:21**. Both Solomon and Jesus say the MOST IMPORTANT thing is OBEDIENCE. *Unless we OBEY GOD, we can't enjoy the SALVATION the Lord offers!*

Consider briefly the context of **chapter 12**. Seems he's given the schedule for man's existence. **Vs. 1** starts at youth ... **vs. 3**- "house"= physical body; "keepers"= hands that shake with palsy; "grinders"= teeth; "strong men"= legs; "look out of windows"= eyesight; and we get right into old age.. **Vs. 5**-says we're brought right through the NATURAL SCHEDULE. **YOUTH>>MIDDLE AGE>>OLD AGE>>>then DEATH!** And even though men can SPLIT THE ATOM and EVEN WALK ON THE MOON, they CAN'T CHANGE THE SCHEDULE! In view of the fact that man is born to die [viz, *material things pass away*], Solomon concludes with our text!

Living examples of the text right here in this audience today! And every one of us has been born to die! Young people here ... middle aged ... older folks. One year from now it's quite possible many of us may no longer be among the living. If true, we'll just be keeping the schedule of **Eccl. 12**. Thus, **the most important thing in the world for us is to obey the God Who made us by KEEPING HIS COMMANDMENTS!**

I. HOW IMPORTANT IS OBEDIENCE?

A. Material things must pass away!

1. A very familiar song says: ***"Earth holds no treasure but perish with using..."***
2. **Matt.6:19-20**. We have no permanent security here!
3. *We're born to die ... so, keep His commandments!* **Matt.7:21b**.

B. I'd like to suggest **THREE THINGS** that confirm the bigness of obedience:

1. It's the **ONLY WAY** man can show that he **LOVES** God!
 - a) **Mk.12:30**-*"And you shall love the lord your god with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength."* HOW can we show this "loving God"? **1 Jno.5:3**.
 - b) The **only way** to show it is to **KNOW** and **OBEY** the truth!
 - c) **Heb.1:1**-the way God tells us He loves us is through the gospel of His Son! The way we respond to God is **IN OUR OBEDIENCE!**
2. It's the **ONLY WAY** we can show that we **BELIEVE** God!
 - a) **Heb.11:6**. **NO QUESTION** about it being necessary, is there? How can we show it?
 - b) Years ago, **NOAH believed God**, and manifested it by building an ARK! [How did he choose an "ark" to build? Why not a tree house? Or a swinging bridge?] He was **OBEYING** God!!
 - c) **ABRAHAM believed God** enough to be willing to sacrifice his son to show the faith and devotion he had to God!
 - d) **Heb.11:24-25**- **MOSES** said "NO" to the pleasures of sin in order to show his faith!
 - e) Regardless of how much you **THINK** you believe God, if He can't get you to obey Him --- **there's something wrong with your faith!**
 - f) To **KNOW** what's **RIGHT** and not do it shows a weakness in our faith and love! cf. **Jas.4:17**.
3. And it's the **ONLY WAY** we can show our **WISDOM!**
 - a) Both the wise and the foolish can attend classes and worship services.
 - b) How can we tell if **WE'RE** the **WISE** or the **FOOLISH** before God? **Matt.7:24, 26**-*"Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock." 26 "And everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand."*

- c) BOTH **heard** and **knew**, but **ONLY THE WISE OBEYED!**
- d) That's the ONE WAY to show our wisdom before God --- **by our OBEDIENCE!**
- C. God gave us the gospel ["good news"] through His Son Jesus Christ --- and it's written for us in the NT.
 - 1. Our LOVE and FAITH and WISDOM is shown by whether or not we READ, and KNOW, and OBEY the will of our Lord Jesus Christ!
 - 2. ***GOD KNOWS*** our **love** and **faith** and **wisdom** by the way we accept the gospel! **Matt.7:24-28.**

II. REGARDING OBEDIENCE, CERTAIN THINGS THAT ARE SEEMINGLY MINOR AT TIMES BECOME VERY MAJOR! *[Three things that are minor to some are very important to those who are trying to obey the Lord!]*

- A. At every service we join our voices together in singing songs of praise to God!
 - 1. WHY do we just SING -- with no instruments of music? **NOT** just to be different. **NOT** because we can't purchase an instrument. And **NOT** because nobody knows how to play one!
 - 2. Then what are you trying to do? **TRYING TO OBEY GOD!**
 - 3. ***God picked VOCAL music!*** **Col.3:16; Eph.5:19; 1 Cor.14:15.**
 - 4. We humans, who are headed for death and eternity, are showing our ***faith & love & wisdom*** by our obedience to the teachings of God!
 - a) We're NOT obeying God if we refuse to sing! *[That's not doing enough!]*
 - b) And we're NOT obeying God if we ADD an instrument of music! *[That's doing too much!]*
- B. EVERY Lord's day Christians meet to break bread together, to commune with the Lord. **Acts 20:7.**
 - 1. At the death of his mother, a man got the big family Bible ... it had a lock of hair in it.
 - a) His mother had kept that lock of hair in memory of her own mother.
 - b) We keep our own memorials in the forms of pictures, baby shoes, a paper clipping of a funeral, or the picture of a beautiful bride, etc. etc.
 - 2. God fixed a memorial supper to commemorate His Son's death.
 - a) **1 Cor.11:23-30.** *"This do in remembrance of me...!"*
 - b) God gave us the power to REMEMBER ... We can meet and think of Jesus' death & His blood.
 - 3. Not morbid. Doesn't become commonplace every week. Simply seeking to **OBEY GOD!**
- C. There's a baptistry right here behind me. It's filled with warmed water. A change of clothing is available.
 - 1. Now I realize that *many say baptism is not essential to salvation!* **Rom.6:3-5;** And after hearing "JESUS" preached by Philip, the man from Ethiopia wanted to be baptized. **Acts 8:36-38.**
 - 2. On the day of Pentecost, Peter & the other apostles preached **F+R+B.** **Acts 2:36-38.**
 - 3. Friend, both ideas can't be right! Baptism IS essential to salvation, or it isn't! What will you take for YOUR guide? **Mk.16:16; Acts 22:16; 1 Pet.3:21.**
 - 4. Yes, friend, it's getting even more conclusive, isn't it? **Obeying the Lord is the most important thing in the world for men!**

III. OBEDIENCE TO AND LOVE FOR GOD EXPRESSED AROUND US DAILY!

- A. Consider two houses on the same street, right next door to each other.
 - 1. In one of them the man is a liar, a gambler, an adulterer, and a drunkard.
 - 2. In the other is a Christian; he's honest & upright, a good husband, father, and citizen!
 - 3. What's the difference between the two? It's the difference between obedience and disobedience! ONE has enough love and faith to obey God.
 - 4. Whatever question comes up in your life ... are YOU willing to OBEY GOD?
- B. Or, look at a man with two employees.
 - 1. One is truthful and honest ... the other is a dishonest liar.
 - 2. The one who's dishonest doesn't have enough love to obey God!

3. Again, the difference between **obedience** and **disobedience** is ***FAITH and LOVE!***
4. If you've never obeyed the Lord, I sincerely hope it bothers you!
 - a) If you can say: "I've never repented or been baptized; I don't commune with the Lord around the Lord's Supper; though I may be a good moral person I've been rejecting the Lord; a few little white lies; maybe a little dishonest at times ...I HOPE YOUR CONSCIENCE HURTS!
 - b) It SHOULD HURT, because you're doing the WORST thing in the world!
5. The MOST IMPORTANT THING is your obedience!
- C. Need to obey GOD'S WILL --- **not your own!** **Matt.7:21.**
 1. The way many people practice religion is to *decide for themselves* **WHAT THEY WANT TO DO** religiously, do it, **then try to tell God He'll have to be satisfied with that!**
 2. ACCEPTABLE OBEDIENCE is to do God's will even if your parents or your husband or YOU think differently about it!

IV. CONSIDER THE REWARDS THAT COME FROM DOING THE WILL OF GOD!

- A. FIRST, you're ***ABLE TO PRAY*** to God & **expect Him to hear you!** **Jas.5:16-** "*...righteous man...*"
 1. Think about the sinful man who's never R.C.B., when he prays----
 - a) "*O, God, my Father...*" **BUT HE ISN'T!!** God hasn't been allowed to be his Father!
 - b) "*Jesus, my Saviour...*" **BUT HE ISN'T!!** Christ died for nothing; ***he's never obeyed gospel!***
 2. Some of us here today can't be assured our prayers will be heard by God -- because of disobedience!
- B. ALSO, please note that "***PEACE OF MIND***" is such a reward!
 1. As in **Rom.8:1-** "*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are IN CHRIST JESUS.*" Remember, those who are IN CHRIST JESUS are those who have been **BAPT. INTO CHRIST!** **Gal.3:27.**
 2. To be **IN CHRIST** is to be **MEM. OF HIS CHURCH.** To be **IN CHRIST** is to be **SAVED!** **Acts 2:47.**
 3. Cannot be **SAVED** outside of Christ --- or outside of **HIS CHURCH!**
 4. Nothing else in this world can give such peace of mind, than to know we've obeyed the Lord and are precious to Him **IN CHRIST, IN HIS CHURCH!**
- C. The **THIRD REWARD** is that **you have HOPE!**
 1. A young man who had been preaching the gospel got cancer, died at 42.
 2. In talking about the power to get through such an ordeal he had said: "I taught others how to live; I told them about Christ; I've tried to obey Him, and I want to face death bravely. Now, I want to show them how to die!"
 3. His wife mirrored his faith and love when she said: **"I'll not mourn as though he had no hope!"**
 4. **SUCH A HOPE** is to be had only by obedience to Jesus Christ!

CONCLUSION:

Isn't it wonderful? You can pray effectively; you can have peace of mind when you're forgiven; and you can have the hope of heaven as a Christian! Obeying the will of God brings these to you --- there's no other way!

It's SAD, but some of us here today are still sinners! If something happens to us before we change, we'll be lost forever! If you haven't been obeying God, **I WANT YOU TO BELIEVE THAT YOU'RE WRONG!** SAY IT TO YOURSELF, won't you? "*I've been wrong, but I won't be wrong any more!*" **OBEY GOD TODAY, FOR THIS IS THE CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE MATTER, AND IT'S THE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU'LL EVER DO!** And the reason you ought to obey God is given in **Eccl 12:14-** "*For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.*"